

TAX POSSESSION COMMITTEE
DRAFT MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 1, 2006 MEETING
10:00 AM
WESTFORD TOWN HALL

Members present: A. Justin McCarthy; Angela Harkness; Mary L. Caless
Also present: William Turner, Conservation Coordinator

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 by A. Justin McCarthy.

A Motion was made by AJM, seconded by AH to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 5, 2006. The Motion passed 2-0-1.

Pursuant to a discussion at the January 1, 2006 meeting two deeds were presented for signature by the Committee members. These deeds were for transfers of tax title property which had already been approved by Town Meeting vote but never properly effectuated. On the advice of Town Counsel the Committee had voted to sign the deeds at the last meeting. Both deeds were signed by all Committee members.

Bill Turner presented and updated inventory list of town owned land held by the Tax Possession Committee. Bill will continue to work on the list to assure that is comprehensive and to identify each parcel by street address and acreage.

AJM reported that he had received no contact from the attorney representing the Mannones. AJM will attempt to contact him again regarding redemption of this parcel. During the meeting the Committee was informed by staff that the attorney in question had telephoned indicating his confusion of the date of the Committee meeting. Justin will follow up and attempt to have the Mannones represented at the next meeting.

The creation of a procedure for notifying Town departments and committees of existing parcels titled to the Tax Possession Committee was discussed. The Committee agreed it would be appropriate to make a list of such parcels (presently being worked on by BT) and distribute it to all departments and committees. Any interested entity would then notify this Committee in writing of their interest at which point the Committee would confirm legal ownership and availability of the parcel. Once notified in writing of ownership and availability the interested entity could perform further due diligence and then proceed to the Selectmen with this Committees determination of ownership and availability in hand to request that further action be taken. The Committee discussed the fact that it is not within its purview to make policy decisions on how parcels should be used. The Committees role is limited to accepting title to parcels that have been taken for taxes, informing the community as to what parcels it has title to and transferring parcels in accordance with Town Meeting direction. Parcels of no interest to the Town could be sold at auction or transferred for value to abutters in an effort to get them back on the tax roles.

AJM informed the Committee that Town Meeting had voted on transferring a particular parcel of land to Westford resident Linnea Flint. Flint had been paying taxes on this parcel for many years but because of an error in a deed description the land had been taken for taxes along with the land of an abutter. The matter had been reviewed by Town Counsel and the transfer had been recommended. The Committee signed the deed presented with Justin recusing himself because of his representation of the Flints.

AH brought up the fact that she had been approached by a member of the Affordable Housing Committee regarding a particular parcel being held by the Tax Possession Committee which the AHC is interested in for the purpose of constructing affordable housing. AH will inform the AHC that they should make a written request to this Committee after which ownership will be determined. Once ownership is determined the AHC can take that written determination from this Committee to the Selectmen along with other elements of their proposal to request Town Meeting approval of the transfer.

Next Meeting: March 22, 2006 at 10:00 AM

MEETING ADJOURNED: 10:45 AM